

Appendix M. Definitions and Descriptions of Public Involvement Terms

Arbitration - A process in which the parties voluntarily submit their case to a neutral party for decision, often resulting in negotiating a tailored set of rules of procedure which all parties agree to follow.

Arbitrator - A person that hears presentations of the facts and make recommendations (binding or non-binding) as to settlement.

Consensus - Everyone understands, can live with, and supports the decision. Consensus only works with a clear fall-back decision-making process. The power of consensus comes from agreement among all of those who might differ or block. Consensus decisions may be self implementing and may need less monitoring than a mediated agreement.

Consensus building - Refers to a range of processes used to foster dialogue, clarify areas of agreement and disagreement, and resolve controversial issues. Voluntary processes in which the participants seek a mutually acceptable resolution of their differences.

Conciliation - Consists of the attempt by a neutral party, generally with no stake in the dispute, to communicate separately with disputing parties for the purpose of reducing tensions and agreeing on a process for resolving the issues.

Dispute resolution - Method that focuses on structuring incentives to deal with differences in interests or values and on improved communication between parties in order to better identify options that satisfy these different interests and values.

Facilitation - A process to increase the potential for dialogue and productivity in public meetings, informal workshops, and consensus building processes.

Facilitator - The role of the facilitator is to help keep the discussion on topic, encourage participation by everyone, maintain a constructive tone, and summarize areas of agreement or disagreement, as needed.

Joint fact-finding - A process to help deal with the technical complexity of issues and scientific uncertainty, where this creates obstacles to agreement (parties discuss what factual questions they believe to be relevant to the decision, exchange information, identify where they agree and where they disagree, and negotiate an approach for seeking additional information, either to fill the gaps or to resolve areas of disagreement). A process in which parties agree on the design of a scientific model or scientific study in advance.

Mediation - Involves the assistance of a neutral third party in the negotiation process. However, a mediator, unlike a judge, has no power to direct the parties. Instead, the mediator helps parties reach their own agreement. Mediation can take various forms, depending on the decision to be made and the stage of the dispute.

Mediator - The role of the mediator is to assist the settlement or agreement-seeking process. A person with no stake in the outcome of the dispute.

Negotiation - Is a process in which parties meet face to face to reach a mutually acceptable resolution of competing interests. Negotiation, broadly defined, is common in all aspects of our lives and for all kinds of conflicts. Negotiations are often difficult processes to organize and conduct effectively, especially when they involve resource management issues, which are both politically and technically complex. The large number of parties, disagreements about the facts, and other complicating factors often create circumstances in which parties question the appropriateness of negotiation, give up, or reach impasse.

Negotiator - The role of the negotiator is to help parties convene negotiations, to prevent impasse during the negotiations, and to assist parties to continue when their discussions have broken down.